

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-05

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R 162322 Z MAR 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KABUL

USMISSION GENEVA

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FOLL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM VIENTIANE 16 MAR 73 REPEATED TO
YOU QUOTE

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E. O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SNAR, AF

SUBJECT: AERIAL SURVEY OF POPPY GROWING AREAS

REF: STATE 037589

1. OUR IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE FOR THIS YEAR WAS TO GET GENERAL DATA
ON POPPY CROP LOCATIONS AND ESTIMATES OF PRODUCTION TO USE IN OUR
ENFORCEMENT AND CROP SUBSTITUTION PLANNING AND AS A ROUGH
BASELINE FOR COMPARISON WITH A SIMILAR PHOTO SURVEY WE WOULD
PLAN FOR NEXT GROWING SEASON. THIS HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED ALTHOUGH
WE EXPERIENCED TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE CAMERA AND ITS
ELECTRICAL CONNECTIONS IN THE AIRPLANE. VISIBILITY FOR THE SURVEY
WAS ALSO HINDERED TO SOME DEGREE BY SMOKE FROM THE BURNING OF
SOME UPLAND FIELDS (RESULT OF SWIDDEN AGRICULTURE PROCESS
USED BY THE HILLTRIBES).

2. AERIAL PHOTO TECHNIQUE USED WAS PARALLEL FLIGHT LINES KEYED
TO A PARTICULAR NAVIGATIONAL GUIDANCE SYSTEM GEARED TO A LORAN
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(NOT EYE- BALL EFFECT). A TWIN- ENGINE VOLPAR TURBO- BEECH WAS FLOWN AT 14,000 FEET ALTITUDE (AVERAGE GROUND ELEVATION PLUS 10,000 FEET) AND 152 KNOT AIR SPEED. A WILD RC-8 CAMERA SYSTEM WAS USED. WE FLEW 5 DAYS COVERING 386 SQUARE MILES OF TERRITORY THAT REQUIRED 6 SPOOLS OF DOUBLE X AEROGRAPHIC FILM (NO. 2405) 250 FEET PER SPOOL. AFTER PICTURES WERE DEVELOPED THE FLIGHT LINES WERE DRAWN ON A 1/250,000 MAP AND THE METHOD OF TRANSFER THE PHOTOS TO MAPS WAS TO DIRECTLY IDENTIFY

POPPY AREAS AND CALCULATE CONVERSION BY PHOTO MEASUREMENT NOT STEREOGRAPHIC MEASUREMENT. A 20 PERCENT ERROR WAS ACCEPTED AND THE GENERAL AREA WAS PLOTTED ON THE MAP WITH INFORMATION IN METERS.

3. THESE PLOTTED AREAS GAVE CONCENTRATIONS OF OPIUM FIELDS THAT WILL ENABLE US TO PLAN FUTURE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAMS. THE PHOTOS SHOWED THAT FOR THE MOST PART AREAS OF HEAVIEST CONCENTRATION HAD READY ACCESS TO EXISTING TRANSPORTATION ROUTES. THE PLOTTED AREAS GAVE PRELIMINARY INDICATION THAT AMOUNT OF OPIUM GROWN IN NORTHERN LAOS IS LESS (AT LEAST THIS YEAR) THAN HAS BEEN FORMERLY ESTIMATED (30 TONS). AT PRESENT WORK IS BEING CONDUCTED ON THE GROUND, WHERE POSSIBLE, TO GIVE US MORE ACCURATE OPIUM CROP YIELD DATA SO THAT WE CAN CORRELATE THE INFORMATION GATHERED FROM THE AERIAL SURVEY WITH ACTUAL YIELDS. THIS, OF COURSE, REQUIRES MUCH MORE WORK BECAUSE OF THE MANY VARIABLES INVOLVED I. E. ELEVATION OF CROP, TYPE OF SOIL, NUMBER OF TIMES A PARTICULAR PLOT HAS BEEN USED TO GROW OPIUM, AND THE TYPE OF HILLTRIBE GROWING THE OPIUM.

4. IN SUMMARY, THE AERIAL SURVEY, THOUGH LIMITED IN SCOPE, IS GIVING THE MISSION BASIC INFORMATION ON WHICH (A) TO ESTIMATE MORE ACCURATELY THE ACTUAL PRODUCTION OF OPIUM; (B) TO USE AS BASELINE DATA TO COMPARE WITH PLANNED REPEAT AERIAL SURVEY NEXT GROWING SEASON; (C) TO PLAN FUTURE AGRICULTURE REDIRECTION PROGRAMS; AND (D) TO PINPOINT LARGEST AREAS OF OPIUM PRODUCTION FOR USE IN PLANNING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.
GODLEY UNQUOTE ROGERS

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